



Poison Plant Safety

How to Avoid Poisonous Plants

What is the Problem?

Poisonous plants can cause problems when ingested or contacted with skin, but most commonly it is the allergic reaction to the sap oil on these plants like poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac that cause the biggest problem.¹

Who is at Risk?

The majority of people at risk are outdoor workers: farmers, landscapers, and groundskeepers along with any other workers who spend time outside.² Forestry workers and firefighters who battle forest fires are additionally at risk because they could potentially develop rashes and lung irritation from contact with damaged or burning poisonous plants.³ Along with these workers any common child or adult hiker is at equal risk when travelling in forest areas.⁴



Prevention Tips

Adults and children can learn to reduce their chances of being poisoned by any plant by following the tips below:

- Identify the plants:
 - The saying "*Leaves of three, Let it be!*" is a helpful reminder for identifying poison ivy and poison oak.⁵
 - Poison Ivy: Eastern poison ivy is typically a hairy, ropelike vine with three shiny green (or red in the fall) leaves budding from one small stem while Western poison ivy is typically a low shrub with three leaves.⁶ Either could have flowers (yellow or green) and berries (white, green-yellow, or amber).⁷
 - Poison Oak: This plant is typically a shrub with leaves of three, similar to poison ivy.⁸ However Pacific poison oak may be vine-like and could have flowers (yellow or green) and clusters of berries (green-yellow or white).⁹
- Wear full-coverage clothing: long sleeves, long pants, boots, and gloves.¹⁰
- Apply protective cream before chances of contact and clean thoroughly afterwards.¹¹
- Never burn plants that may be poisonous.¹²



Plan of the Week (POW):

Poisonous plants are a part of wild life and should be carefully observed to prevent allergic reactions and other unhealthy contact.¹³ **ALWAYS** remember to wear protective clothing when there is a chance of coming on contact with poisonous plants.¹⁴ If you experience any symptoms within a few days of possible contact such as a red rash, possible bumps or blisters (blister fluids are not contagious), swelling, or itching then clean the area(s) thoroughly.¹⁵ **DO NOT** touch the eye area and consult a medical professional if needed.¹⁶

References

- 1-16 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Poisonous Plants.
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/plants/>. Updated 11 July
2013. Accessed 25 Aug 2013.

Photo Credit - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Poisonous Plants.

NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphec/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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